United Nations

Press Release

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ During informal consultations, coalition members report to Security Council on progress of military action in Persian Gulf.

+ UNDRO reports 80,000 people in Iraq moving towards Iranian border.

+ International Committee of Red Cross says it has fulfilled its mandate in accordance with 1949 Geneva Conventions during first week of hostilities in Gulf region.

+ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women begins tenth session in Vienna.

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The Security Council held informal consultations this afternoon on the Persian Gulf question. A United Nations official said that at the meeting, members of the coalition would report on their military activities, and the President intended to open the floor to others wishing to express their views.

The United Nations official said that, following the request by the Union of Arab Maghreb countries for an urgent meeting of the Council on the Gulf situation, the Council President had this morning received members of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), co-ordinated by Qatar, together with the representatives of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, who had informed him of their opposition to the request of the Maghreb countries. The Council was expected to discuss the position of the GCC countries during this afternoon's consultations.

The Council President was also expected to have bilateral consultations during the day and to meet with various other member countries who had asked to see him.

The request by the Union of Arab Maghreb countries for a Security Council meeting was supported today by the Sudan.

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For information media—not an official record

The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) reported today in its latest update on refugees and displaced persons in the Gulf that some 80,000 people in Iraq were currently moving towards the Iranian border. The Agency said the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UNDRO Resident Representative had held a meeting with the international donor community to brief them on a unified United Nations appeal for aid to the refugees.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported today from Geneva that it had fulfilled its mandate under the provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions "whenever it was required and able to do so" during the first week of hostilities in the Gulf region.

The Committee said advance preparedness posts had been set up near the borders in countries neighbouring Iraq and Kuwait (Jordan, Iran, Syria and Bahrain) and preparations for setting up field hospitals were well under way.

Since 19 January, the Red Cross had organized airlifts from Europe with medical material to those countries. The Committee said it would continue to mobilize the additional human and material resources required for the smooth running of a humanitarian operation of that magnitude.

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The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women began its tenth session in Vienna on Monday to review steps taken by 10 Governments to improve the status of women in the socio-economic and political fields.

During its current two-week session, scheduled to conclude on 1 February, the Committee will consider the initial reports of Italy and Burkina Faso, and the second periodic reports of Austria, Denmark, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

Opening the session, Chafika Sellami-Meslem, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, called for increased resources to carry out the Committee's work and stressed the importance of long-term planning to improve efficiency.

The newly elected Chairman, Mervat El- Tallawy, expert of Egypt, called for co-operation in achieving the Committee's goals -- equality and the advancement of women.

The Committee set up two open-ended working groups, one to suggest ways of expediting the work of the Committee and another to consider the Committee's general recommendations to the General Assembly.

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Composed of 23 experts, the Committee is the international body set up to monitor the progress made by States parties to implement the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The experts meet annually to review periodic country reports. As of 15 January, 103 States were party to the Convention.

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CORRECTION: In Tuesday's Highlights, Press Release DH/811 of 22 January, the penultimate paragraph on page 5 should be corrected to read as follows:

"In a related development, Carl-Magnus Hyltenius (Sweden), Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, a subsidiary body of the Conference on Disarmament, briefed the press today in Geneva on the status of the negotiations under way on the draft convention on chemical weapons. He said existing international instruments, notably the Geneva Protocol on chemical weapons, had definite weaknesses because they did not prohibit production of chemical weapons, and the draft convention was seeking to address that weakness."